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To: State Corporation Commission (SCC)

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From: Lynn Godfrey - Chesapeake, VA Resident

RE: PUR-2019-00207 – Comment Opposing Case# PUR-2019-00207

Please file this correspondence to the referenced case file - PUR-2019-00207

Virginia Natural Gas - For approval and certification of natural gas facilities: the Header Improvement Project and for approval of Rate Schedules and Terms and Conditions for Pipeline Transportation Service

### Summary

"People of color disproportionately bear climate impacts, from storms to heat waves to pollution. Fossil-fueled power plants and refineries are disproportionately located in black neighborhoods, leading to poor air quality and putting people at higher risk for coronavirus. Such issues are finally being covered in the news media more fully (Ayana Elizabeth Johson, 2020)."

Environmental justice is the concept that no one population or community of people should disproportionally bear the burden of environmental impact risks associated with the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies derived from the buildout of various energy or transportation infrastructures. To accomplish this the meaningful involvement of all people impacted is required at each stage of development.

In Hampton Roads, three potentially dangerous fracked gas pipelines, the ACP (Atlantic Coast Pipeline); the HIP (Header Improvement Project); and, the Southside Connector Pipeline, all find their way through neighborhoods within 1 to 3 mile radius of all three pipelines terminating at, or near the energy industry corridor on Military Hwy. Neighborhoods already burden with the City's highest prevalence rates for asthma, diabetes, and other chronic disease. Chesapeake is ranked 5th in the state for air pollution further fossil fuel buildout will only intensify this standing.

As a resident of Chesapeake, VA, residing within a 3-mile radius of the proposed Gidley Compressor Station; and, as a concerned citizen for my fellow citizens residing closer to this proposed compressor station, I oppose VNG's Header Improvement Project based on environmental justice principles. As Marine Biologist, Ayanna Johnson asserted in her article with the Washington Post, it is black neighborhoods that "disproportionately bear climate impacts," and this includes fossil-fuel infrastructure build out and fossil-fuel power plants, such as the C4GT gas power plant proposed in VNG's application with the SCC for a certification of convenience and necessity. Both Chesapeake and Charles City County's resident who are disproportionately impacted by this dangerously polluting proposed project are black and working-class people. Both communities suffer excessively from health disparities – Asthma, Diabetes, Heart Disease, and Infectious Diseases (Healthcare, 2018) (Canaday & Stewart, 2016).

# Neighborhoods Within 1-2 Mile Radius of the Proposed Gidley Compressor Station

The proposed Chesapeake Compressor Station site is surrounded by some of the most populous neighborhoods in the City - Eva Gardens, Sturbridge Trailer Homes, Fairfield and Parkwood, Crestwood Manor, and others, is the nexus for two other speculative pipelines, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) and the Southside Connector. Many of these neighborhoods are within the blast zones (explosions caused by escaping gas) of these pipelines. The dangers the Header Improvement Project pose to our and future generations include: particulate matter that lowers air quality and impacts those with asthma (Chesapeake is ranked 5th in the state for air pollution), COPD, and other respiratory conditions, explosions and noise pollution. The sounds generated from high pressured concentrated fractured gas can cause and contribute to many diseases, including cardiovascular symptoms and cancer (Health, 2017).

The City's Stormwater & Transportation Projects map depicts the proximity of the proposed Gidley Compressor station (2512 S. Military Hwy.) and nearby neighborhoods (Sturbridge Mobile Homes; Parkwood Manor; Belvin Heights, etc.).

Stormwater & Transport x

Parkwood

Transport x

Stormwater & Transport x

Figure 1

Stormwater & Transport x

Figure 1

Stormwater & Transport x

Figure 2

Stormwater & Transport x

Figure 3

Figure 3

Figure 3

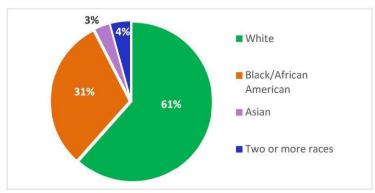
Figure 4

Figur

Figure 1: Map of Proposed Gidley Compressor Station and Nearby Neighborhoods

## Demographics of Neighborhoods

### Race



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

In 2017, Chesapeake's population was comprised of 61% white, 31% African American, 4% two or more races, 3% Asian.

### Percentage of Race by Zip Code

The illustrations below depict the population of persons by race in the city's zip codes. The two (2) zip codes closest to the site are 23320 and 23324. The majority of African Americans in Chesapeake reside within the two, with up to 86.4 for 23324 and up to 41.5 for 23320. Although, the propose Gidley Compressor would be in 23320, it lies within less than one mile (0.8) from neighborhoods in 23324 to its northeast.

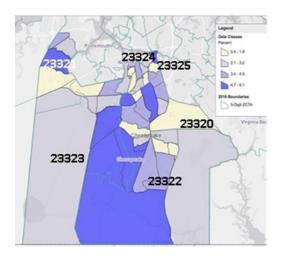
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

The U.S. Census maps below show the racial composition of Chesapeake, by zip code, and of Northeastern North Carolina counties within the hospital's service area.

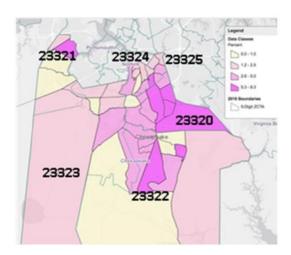
### African American

# 23321 23324 23325 Constitute of the Constitute o

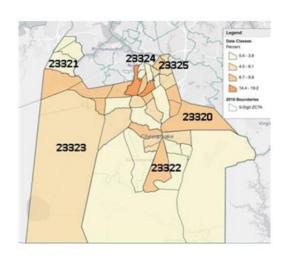
### Two or more races



### Asian Population

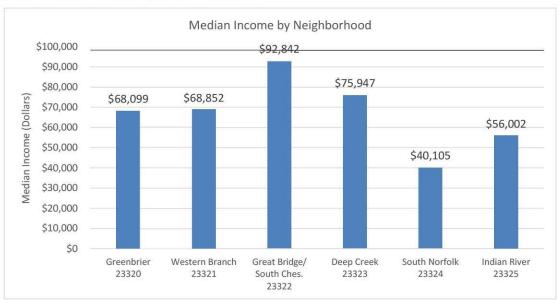


Hispanic (Latinx)



### CHESAPEAKE: MEDIAN INCOME BY NEIGHBORHOOD

The 2016 median income in Chesapeake was \$69,978. 2016 median incomes in Chesapeake's zip code areas range from \$40,105 in South Norfolk, to \$92,842 in Great Bridge/South Chesapeake



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

While the physical address for the proposed compressor station has a 23320 zip, it lies closer to the South Norfolk neighborhoods.

### AT-RISK POPULATIONS

Using indicators in the graph below, those age 65 and older in Chesapeake appear to be more at risk for poor well-being and economic issues. Across the city, over 50% of senior citizens pay more than 30% of their income on rent. This ranges from a high of 74% in South Norfolk to the lowest percent 53% in Deep Creek (Healthcare, 2018).

The second greatest issue for seniors is living alone. The Greenbrier area has the highest percentage (42%) of seniors living alone, and Great Bridge/Southern Chesapeake has the smallest percentage (24%).



### Health Indicators

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's 2018 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, blacks in Chesapeake bear the biggest burden for diabetes, child low birthrate, adult mortality and poor environmental health outcomes. Low birth weight for blacks in Chesapeake is 13% v 7% for whites. Chesapeake suffers higher levels of air pollution due to particulate matter and severe housing problems at higher rates than the state's average. Chesapeake is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the state for air pollution (Club, 2014).

Chesapeake's infant mortality rate is 50% higher for blacks than white at 10 per 1000 live births compared to 5 for whites (RWJF, 2018).

### Internet Use and Service Provider

While Chesapeake residents on average have high internet usage ranging in the high 80 to 90 percent range, those living in the census tract close to the proposed compressor station does not. Census tract 515500-205 medium income is less than \$40,000 at \$34,000 and a poverty rate at 38% is over 40% black with the primary source of internet access cell phones at 52%.

### Conclusion

Placing another source of air pollution in close proximity to neighborhoods already burden with the city's highest levels of health disparities and environmental health conditions as a result of high air pollution in the midst of covid-19 pandemic would be unjust and violation of their civil rights.

As attested by several expert energy witnesses this Header Improvement Project is neither needed nor convenient for those who would carry the highest burden of the environmental risks associated with its build out. The SCC has adequate testimony not only from those opposing this dangerous build out, but, also from VNG themselves based on their changing purpose for the project from its original intent stated in their December 2019 application. SCC Staff has rightfully recommended this project be denied and for VNG to submit another application with its current need for the project.

### References

- Ayana Elizabeth Johson, M. B. (2020, June 3). I'm a black Climate Expert. Racism derails our Efforts to Save the Planet. (W. Post, Interviewer)
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